

# Region 1

(Representing CT, ME, MA, NH, NY, RI & VT)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Cris Blackstone

**Company:** Make Scents NH and the NH Landscape Association

**Location:** Newmarket, New Hampshire

**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?**

As the Education Coordinator for the NH Landscape Assoc, UNH Natural Resources Steward and Master Gardener, as well as being a NH Certified Landscaper, I have a lot of networking capability to help bring Garden Comm members in the Region together. I have a lot OG event-planning experience through a first career as a public school administrator, where I planned professional development events and social events to help build a stronger sense of community, too. I have experience with national and regional roles of a similar nature, in education, and can readily transfer those skills and experiences to my first love, horticulture! I'd love to "give back" to the organization which has been so welcoming and helpful to me. As the co-host of a regional radio show on the environment (for us on real life info for gardeners) I am using skills to organize guests and formulate interview outlines to make good use of everyone's time and provide listeners with beneficial information. I believe those skills are also helpful in a Regional Director role. I'm happy to help the Regional Directors whoever they are! Serving on GardenComm Sustainability Committee has brought me in to a constructive group of people, too, and I'd like to meet/serve more members regionally as well as this group nation-wide.



**Professional Biography:** Univ Massachusetts, Stockbridge School, Green School program, 2006; UNH Natural Resources Stewards Program, 2007; New Hampshire Landscape Association Certification Program, 2008; UNH Master Gardeners Program, 2018; NH Landscape Association Education Coordinator, 2019-present; NHLA Professional Newsletter, columnist and photographer 2006-present; Garden and Landscape Photographer, including Massachusetts Horticulture Society "Arts on the Green" event and Mass Hort Society juried photography show, Boston Flower Show 2020, award won; WSCA -FM radio program co-host, although due to Coronavirus, the station has suspended programming of this type due to studio space and CDC recommendations. Content written on freelance basis for other green industry organizations, municipalities, and other outlets 2017-present.

# Region 2

(Representing DE, DC, MD, NJ & PA)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Kim Roman

**Company:** Square Foot Gardening 4 U

**Location:** Glen Burnie, Maryland

**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** For nearly 10 years, I have taught various methods of small-space, high-intensive edible gardening, with an emphasis on the Square Foot Gardening method. In August 2010, I graduated from the SFG Certified Instructor program, and shortly thereafter, I was mentored by SFG's creator, Mel Bartholomew. Less than a year after my graduation, I was asked to organize and teach a 3-day SFG symposium near Baltimore, Maryland. During the last three years of Mel's life, I worked as one of his executive directors, started the SFG Foundation's Facebook page and taught the SFG Online Certified Instructor Course. After his passing, Mel's heirs asked me to help Quarto Publishing with the All New Square Foot Gardening 3rd edition book that was released in November 2018. In June 2019, I was named as a Square Foot Gardening Ambassador. During these past 10 years, I have worked with several non-profit organizations teaching gardening and/or helping start gardens for the homeless, at-risk youth, disabled veterans, school children and those in food deserts. One of my first activities with GWA/GardenComm was participating in a Grow a Row event at Upton Gardens in Baltimore.



# Region 3

(Representing Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin & West Virginia)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Pam Bennett

**Company:** Ohio State University Extension

**Location:** Springfield, Ohio

**Professional Biography:** Pam is an Associate Professor with The Ohio State University and serves as the State Master Gardener Volunteer Program Director and Horticulture Educator for OSU Extension in Clark County.

Pam specializes in herbaceous ornamental plant trials and presents programs on annuals and perennials as well as other landscape topics locally, statewide, and nationally. Pam has also lectured in South Korea, China, Greece, and Turkey. She was scheduled to speak in Italy but then Covid 19 hit! She is a Clark County Park District Commissioner, and a Board member of the Hartman Rock Garden and The Abilities Connection. She is the Past-President of the Friends of the Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden.

Pam is the co-author of an award-winning book, Garden-pedia, An A-to- Z Guide to Gardening Terms, writes a weekly gardening column for eight counties receiving the Cox Publishing brands, authored the bi-monthly Ask the Expert Column for Ohio Gardening magazine and has written for gardening magazines as well as trade publications.



# Region 4

(Representing AL, FL, GA, MS, NC, SC, TN & VA)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Kate Clary

**Company:** Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association

**Location:** Orlando, Florida



**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** I bring passion, a nose for news, reasonably good grammar, and a robust appreciation for writers. I have more than a decade of professional experience in finding stories, following where they lead, and capturing them for distribution in print and online publications. I've worked in newsrooms, from the front seat of my Fiat 500, and while sitting on the pavement just feet away from where historic events were occurring. I bring an enormous love and appreciation for not only the craft of writing, but for those brave enough to burden themselves with the task. If selected, I will work to help develop and support those around me.

**Professional Biography:** I spent the first decade of my career as a journalist writing a myriad features and hard news for magazines, newspapers and websites in California, Florida, New Jersey and New York. In the later years, I landed at the New York Post for a spell working as a street reporter before pivoting my career to online writing and editing. After that, I spent three years as social media manager and newsroom editor for a hyper-local newspaper in the small town where my husband, Jon, and I purchased our first home: DeLand, Florida. Four years ago, I landed my dream job at the Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, a professional organization which represents roughly 2,000 member companies and puts on two industry trade shows each year, the Tropical Plant International Expo, and The Landscape Show. My duties include sourcing, writing, editing, placing and distributing stories about horticulture for FNGLA's digital properties. Those include its website, [www.fngla.org](http://www.fngla.org), and its consumer gardening site, [www.floridagardening.org](http://www.floridagardening.org). I also compile and publish FNGLA's handful of print and electronic newsletters like Greenline, which enjoy a combined circulation of more than 20,000. I have earned a bachelor's degree in magazine journalism, a Master's degree in global strategic communication, and am currently working on my Ph.D. in agricultural communications.

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Peggy Riccio

**Company:** [pegplant.com](http://pegplant.com)

**Location:** Alexandria, Virginia



**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** One of my strengths is that I have been in the horticultural communications field for more than 20 years. Through my garden writing, speaking, and events, I have a tremendous network of contacts that include subject matter experts, industry representatives, and other garden communicators. I make it a point to meet new people and to network. For example, in 2018, I initiated the annual Capital Region Connect, a social networking event for horticulturists and landscape designers who work in the green industry. This includes wholesale and retail nurseries, public gardens, botanical gardens, and arboreta. Capital Region Connect is a private, invitation only event for people to "connect," network, and share with others in the Washington DC metro

area. My other strengths are that I am willing to take on new projects, learn new tasks, and learn new technologies, such as Mailchimp, Wordpress, and Anchor. I am highly organized and detail oriented, and I work well with others. I am very interested in promoting GardenComm and collaborating with other organizations to spread the word.

**Professional Biography:** I have a B.S. in horticulture from Virginia Tech and I garden in a Northern Virginia home. I have been a GardenComm member for many years. I am the chair/president of the Herb Society of America's Potomac Unit and a member of the National Capital Area Garden Clubs, Inc. Before the Internet, I wrote for garden magazines and mailed typed query letters to editors. In April 2014, I decided to write for my own website instead of magazines and created [pegplant.com](http://pegplant.com), which provides gardening resources specific to the DC metro area as well as gardening events every month, newly published books, and gardening articles. In the spring of 2018, I created Pegplant's Post, a free gardening newsletter. In the fall of 2018, I initiated the annual Capital Region Connect, a social networking event for horticulturists and landscape designers who work in the green industry. Capital Region Connect is a private, invitation only event for people to "connect," network, and share with others in the DC metro area. I am active and interested in social media. I give presentations on culinary herbs, edible flowers, and plant propagation. Recently, I have ventured into podcasting with a fellow GardenComm member.

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# Region 5

**(Representing Arkansas, Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas & South Dakota)**

## Regional Director Nominee - NORTH

**Name:** Chris Link  
**Company:** Plant Addicts  
**Location:** Valley, Nebraska

**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** I'd like to serve as the regional director to hopefully help impact the midwest region to help members network and meet other members that are nearby. I own a small business that sells plants online. My strengths include organizing, outreach, and planning.



**Professional Biography:** My main area of expertise is SEO. I also own a small business that sells plants online, and we hire many garden writers to help us create content for our website.

## Regional Director Nominee - SOUTH

**Name:** Randy Schultz  
**Company:** Schultz Communications  
**Location:** Colorado Springs, Colorado

**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** I was honored when Becky Heath asked me to run for Regional Director in Region 5 (South). I have been a member of GardenComm since 1999, and I attended my first annual conference in 1997. During the past 23 years, I have been blessed to have attended 21 annual meetings. The members of the association are now my extended family. Being a part of GardenComm has enriched me professionally and personally. Over the years, I have served on the Membership and Communications committees. (I was part of the committee that recommended GardenComm for the new name for our organization.) During my tenure as a GWA/GardenComm member, the garden communications profession has changed radically. As the number of staff positions for garden writers at newspapers has dwindled, bloggers and other online communicators have filled the void left by print publications. Our organization has to continue to adapt to the changing reality that "garden writing" isn't what it used to be. As an organization, we must continue to reach out to younger people who don't yet feel "worthy" of being members in our association. We need to create value to attract new members and keep our existing members. And we should strive to stay relevant in an era where Google, Facebook and Amazon are taking over the world. It's not an easy job. But we have to do it.



**Professional Biography:** With more than 25 years of experience in public relations, advertising and marketing, Randy Schultz, President of Schultz Communications, has provided a broad range of marketing services for a wide variety of clients in the home and garden industry. His list of home and garden industry clients has included

Summit Responsible Solutions, High Country Gardens, American Meadows, Logee's, Mantis, EarthBox, Burpee, Park Seed and many, many more. In 2018, Randy launched HomeGardenandHomestead.com, a website that covers everything new and trending for homes and gardens. Home, Garden and Homestead won a Gold Award in the 2019 Garden Media Awards from GardenComm in the Best Garden Blog category. Randy is a Master Gardener who moved to Colorado Springs, CO, in 2018 (from New Mexico). He is still trying to understand how it can snow on Mother's Day.

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# Region 6 - North

(Representing: AK, ID, MT, OR, WA & WY)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Grace Hensley

**Company:** Fashion Plants

**Location:** Bainbridge Island, Washington



**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** My biggest strength is strategic planning, and refining a vision into actionable steps. I am interested in supporting the Garden Comm community by bringing more professional development training opportunities to the membership; to help us with the business of running our businesses. This provides a concrete, tangible value to becoming a paying member instead of the nebulous 'networking opportunities'. I would specifically focus on the areas of finance and taxes, insurance and legal issues, branding and marketing, your website and social media, client and employee management, and learning new digital tools. I know we are all good gardeners and communicators, but I want to help us all have successful businesses. I expect that the majority of these offerings would be virtual in nature due to the longer distances in my Region, but this would also support all members. Smaller state-specific in-person workshops would be encouraged.

**Professional Biography:** Throughout my professional career (in software development, technical writing, and business strategy), I have been consistently able to synthesize complex information and present it logically, so that clear stepwise progress can be made. I transitioned into garden communication through my love of photography and plants, and am fascinated with the mechanics of marketing and selling in a digital environment. I was a founding member of the Hardy Plant Society of Washington and provided ongoing strategic thinking and program development over 8 years including the establishment of their website and marketing strategy, and volunteer management. My full bio is available on LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/in/grace-hensley-b496a34b/>

# Region 6 - South

(Representing AZ, CA, HI, NV, UT)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Noelle Johnson

**Company:** AZ Plant Lady LLC

**Location:** Chandler, Arizona



**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** I joined GardenComm (then GWA) in 2014 to make connections with other garden writers and communicators. My goal was to serve better the people who live in my area who had an interest in gardening. I attended my first conference in 2015, and from then on, my business expanded quickly as a direct result. Within GardenComm, educational opportunities showed me how to grow the number of people I reach to connections with fellow members and companies; it's fun to see the enormous effect this organization has had on my business. At this point, I'd be remiss in not mentioning the close friendships that I've formed with fellow garden experts in GardenComm. Here is a little background information about me. I am a California native who moved to the desert Southwest years ago. I grew up gardening in my backyard under my father's tutelage. In college, I met my husband, and we moved to his hometown in Arizona, and I've been here for over 34 years. The area that Region 6 South covers is a beautiful area of the country that traditional garden media tends to overlook. Not surprisingly, most gardening practices in Region 6 South are focused on waterwise principles due to the arid climate. Many see low-water gardening as a limit to what they can achieve in the landscape. It's been my privilege to share my expertise with those who live here as a garden communicator, allowing them to see the countless possibilities using plants that don't need a lot of water. I want to give back to the organization that has given so much to me. Over the past few years, I have enjoyed serving on several GardenComm committees and would like to advocate for the garden community in the West and Southwestern U.S. It would be an honor to serve as your Regional Director 6 South of this beautiful area we are privileged to live and garden in.

### **Professional Biography:**

Noelle Johnson is a horticulturist, landscape consultant, & certified arborist. She is the author of the popular blog, *Ramblings From a Desert Garden*, and is a member of the team who writes for *SW Gardening*, (composed of all GardenComm members). Originally from Southern California, Noelle now lives in the Phoenix area where she helps clients create attractive landscapes that thrive in arid climates.

Popularly known as 'AZ Plant Lady', Noelle is an instructor at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix and is a noted speaker. Her newest venture teaching online classes and creating content for her membership program where she shares her expertise to help desert-dwellers along their garden journey.

She has written for several publications including *Birds & Blooms*, *Home Depot*, *Houzz*, *Phoenix Home & Garden*, and *Water Use It Wisely*.

Noelle lives with her husband, two youngest children, 3 dogs and desert tortoise. When she's not helping others with their gardens, you'll find her in the vegetable garden, adding colorful shrubs, or planting a cactus or two.

*Every member is entitled to vote for GardenComm national directors, regardless of region.*

# Region 6

(Representing North: AK, ID, MT, OR, WA & WY and South: AZ, CA, HI, NV, UT)

## National Director Nominee

**Name:** Erica Grivas

**Company:** Seattle Times, Real Simple, New York Post, Chicago Parent, Seattle Greenlaker

**Location:** Seattle, Washington



**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** I'm excited about expanding and strengthening Region 6 membership - creating connection opportunities and building a strong, vibrant community. I'd like to arrange meetups, create a Facebook group or other virtual networking forum, and increase outreach to new and former members. My experience includes a diverse professional background building networks of sources and colleagues while working for print, online, and television media on both coasts. As for strength, I can lift a 3-cubic-foot bag of soil conditioner over my head. (Almost.)

**Professional Biography:** I escaped tabloid reporting at the New York Post and "Inside Edition" by studying landscape design at and becoming a publicist for The New York Botanical Garden's Education program - the largest of its kind in the world. Since then I have been a professional gardener, worked at Seattle's Ravenna Gardens, and written lifestyle and garden features for news blogs like Seattle Greenlaker and publications including the Seattle Times, Real Simple, Connecticut Home and Gardens and Flower Gardens magazines. I'm passionate about showing people how gardening can save the world, both individually and collectively.

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# Region 7

(Representing International & Canada)

## Regional Director Nominee

**Name:** Andrea Whitely

**Company:** Andrea Whitely Garden Consultant

**Location:** Perth, Western Australia

**Why do you wish to serve as a GardenComm director? What strengths and experience do you bring to the Board of Directors?** In my first term, I have contributed to the rebranding project as well as the activities of the Sponsorship Committee. I'm an active and supportive member of the organization and look forward to the future opportunities to give back to the organization which has already pretty video me with so many personal growth and networking opportunities. The engagement of members in Region V11 is vital to ensure that we are a truly international community.



**Professional Biography:** Garden Consultant, writer, blogger, garden design and maintenance. Public Speaker and occasional on air radio personality. Retail worker. Member Horticulture Media Association (AUS) and Regional Director GardenComm International. Lives in Perth, Western Australia.

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